

WHAT IS CLAIMED

1. A retractable object lifting device for use by an operator, said device comprising
a housing having an interior chamber with an opening to the exterior of said housing,
a reel journaled within said housing,
an elongated, flexible lifting member wound around said reel and extending through said opening, said lifting member having a length substantially longer than the reach of an operator,
a device on the end of said flexible member for releasably connecting to an object, and
a spring yieldably rotating said reel to wind said flexible member around said reel, said spring having a predetermined stiffness such that it winds said flexible member onto said reel when an object is not connected to the end of said flexible member whereby when the operator ascends to a position elevated from the ground, said object rests on the ground and the flexible member is unreeled while maintaining said flexible member relatively taut until the operator lifts the object to the elevated position by pulling up said flexible member.
2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said object lifting device further comprises a brake for selectively preventing unreeling of said flexible member
3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein said brake comprises an operator manipulated element selectively inter-engageable with one of a plurality of circumferential recesses on said reel for preventing rotation when engaged.
4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 3 wherein said operator manipulated element comprises a plunger extending from said housing for operation by an operator and engageable and disengageable with the recesses on said reel to selectively engage and disengage said brake.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein said housing has a handle and an opening adjacent said handle of sufficient size to accommodate the gloved hand of an operator.
6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 5 wherein said plunger for said hand brake is adjacent said handle for single-handed holding of said object lifting device and selective accuation of said brake.
7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 6 further comprising a spring for urging said plunger to a disengaged position
8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein said housing is formed from two halves.
9. Apparatus as claimed in claim 8 wherein each of said housing halves has opposed openings and said object lifting device further comprises an insert forming said opening to the exterior of said housing and received in and held by said opposed openings.
10. Apparatus as claimed in claim 9 wherein said insert is be provided one of a circular opening for a rope or circular cross-section flexible member and a slot for accommodating a strap-like flexible member.
11. Apparatus as claimed in claim 8 further comprising an elevated platform for use by an operator and a device connected to one of said housings for attachment to said elevated platform..
12. Apparatus as claimed in claim 8 wherein said reel comprises first and second halves, one of which has a hub and flange and the other having a flange, said halves being snapped together to form a hub and flanges for said flexible elongated member.
13. Apparatus as claimed in claim 12 wherein said hub has a central space and said spring is positioned within said hub.
14. Apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said housing has a central fixed spindle with a slot, said spring comprising a coil leaf spring having one end received in the slot in said spindle and the other end connected to the interior wall of said hub.
15. Apparatus as claimed in claim 8 wherein said housing has a generally cylindrical shape

when viewed in a direction parallel to the axis of rotation of said reel, said housing having three projections extending from said cylindrical/ shape for allowing fastening of said housing halves, one of said projections having a through-slot for receiving a mounting strap for said object lifting device.

16. Apparatus as claimed in claim 15 wherein said opening to the exterior of said housing is adjacent the projection for one of the other of said projections so that said opening faces downward when said object lifting device is mounted by means of said strap receiving slots.
17. Apparatus as claimed in claim 16 further comprising a clip positioned on one of said housing halves for providing mounting of said object lifting device on an operator's clothing so that said opening to the exterior is in a downwardly facing direction.
18. Apparatus as claimed in claim 17 wherein said clip is positioned on said housing half in one of a plurality of orientations, each ninety degrees from one another.